



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: December 10, 2020

Agenda Item: Currant Creek Conservation Easement, Region 5

Action Needed: Endorsement **Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

Background: The proposed Currant Creek Conservation Easement, west of Roundup, is 3,143 deeded acres in association with an additional 960 acres of leased BLM and DNRC acres. The property consists of sagebrush grassland and ponderosa pine savannah, which provide habitat for a diverse assemblage of species, including elk, pronghorn, mule deer, Merriam's turkeys, and other native species populations. The property provides habitat for many nongame species including black-tailed prairie dogs and associated species like burrowing owls. Golden and bald eagles, long-billed curlews, and ferruginous hawks are further examples of the nongame wildlife that use these properties. Currant Creek flows for 2 river miles through this property and has some cottonwood species, sedges, rushes, and cattails that commonly make up riparian habitats in high clay content soils. This land provides winter range for wintering elk, mule deer and pronghorn. Subdivision into 20- to 40-acre parcels is common in this area and poses an immediate risk to these intact native habitats. Due to available funding, FWP is proposing to work on the Currant Creek portion of the original proposal that included a Bootprint Ranch Conservation Easement opportunity.

The proposed conservation easement would protect 3,143 deeded acres of habitat in perpetuity, provide for and improve functioning wildlife habitat, prevent subdivision in an area where that has been occurring, and enhance public access and recreation.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP has not sought formal public review of this proposal. Upon endorsement by the commission, FWP would conduct an initial public evaluation. Depending on the response, FWP may proceed further with an environmental analysis including additional public involvement and review.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposal alternatives and analysis would be conducted by FWP if this proposal receives commission endorsement.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission endorse this proposal, allowing the department to further develop and conduct associated analysis, working toward a conservation outcome, and to offer opportunities for public review and comment.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission endorse the proposed Currant Creek Conservation Easement, allowing FWP to conduct further due diligence, analysis, and public review.